Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method for dynamic access decision information retrieval, the method comprising:

receiving a request for access decision information from an application, wherein the request identifies one or more entitlement information items <u>for an entity and an identity of the entity</u>;

determining an information provider for a given entitlement information item within the one or more entitlement information items;

retrieving the given entitlement information item from the information provider<u>, wherein the step of retrieving the given entitlement information item includes generating a retrieval client, wherein the retrieval client retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider</u>;

forming a response, wherein the response includes the one or more entitlement information items; and

returning the ~~container~~ <u>response</u> to the application.

2.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

caching the retrieved given entitlement information item in a local storage.

3.   (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

identifying a cached entitlement information item within the one or more entitlement information item; and

retrieving the cached entitlement information item from a local storage.

4.   (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the cached entitlement information is in the form of a container.

5.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, <u>wherein the request includes a plurality of information items, wherein the step of determining an information provider includes determining a given information provider for each one of the plurality of information items to form a plurality of information providers, and</u> wherein the step of retrieving the given entitlement information item includes:

generating a retrieval client <u>for each one of the plurality of information providers to form a plurality of retrieval clients</u>, wherein <s>the retrieval client retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider</s> <u>each one of the retrieval clients retrieves entitlement information from a given</u> <s>one</s> <u>of the information providers that it is associated with</u>.

6.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, wherein <s>the retrieval client</s> <u>each one of the retrieval clients</u> generates a protocol module <u>to form a plurality of protocol modules,</u> and wherein <s>the protocol module retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider</s> <u>each one of the protocol modules retrieves entitlement information from a given one of the information providers that it is associated with</u> using a provider specific protocol <u>that is compatible with the given one of the information providers</u>.

7.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 5, wherein the <s>retrieved given entitlement information item</s> <u>entitlement information retrieved for all of the retrieval clients</u> is in the form of a container.

8.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 1, wherein the application is an access manager <u>that is operatively coupled to a web server that receives entity requests from the entity across a network</u>.

9.   (Original) The method of claim 8, wherein the access manager includes a rules engine.

10.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[1]] <u>8</u>, wherein the <s>response is an extensible markup language document</s> <u>entity is a user, and wherein the user contacts the web server to obtain a service therefrom</u>.

11.   (Currently Amended) An apparatus for dynamic access decision information retrieval, the apparatus comprising:
       receipt means for receiving a request for access decision information from an application, wherein the request identifies one or more entitlement information items <u>for an entity and an identity of the entity</u>;
       determination means for determining an information provider for a given entitlement information item within the one or more entitlement information items;

retrieval means for retrieving the given entitlement information item from the information provider, wherein the retrieval means includes means for generating a retrieval client, wherein the retrieval client retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider;

forming means for forming a response, wherein the response includes the one or more entitlement information items; and

returning means for returning the ~~container~~ response to the application.

12.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising:

means for caching the retrieved given entitlement information item in a local storage.

13.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 11, further comprising:

means for identifying a cached entitlement information item within the one or more entitlement information item; and

means for retrieving the cached entitlement information item from a local storage.

14.   (Original) The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the cached entitlement information is in the form of a container.

15.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the request includes a plurality of information items, wherein the determination means for determining an information provider includes means for determining a given information provider for each one of the plurality of information items to form a plurality of information providers, and wherein the retrieval means includes:

means for generating a retrieval client, wherein ~~the retrieval client retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider~~ each one of the retrieval clients comprises means for retrieving entitlement information from a given one of the information providers that it is associated with.

16.   (Currently Amended) The method of claim 15, wherein ~~the retrieval client~~ each one of the retrieval clients generates a protocol module to form a plurality of protocol modules, and wherein ~~the protocol module retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider~~ each one of the protocol modules retrieves entitlement information from a given one of the information providers that it is associated with using a provider specific protocol that is compatible with the given one of the information providers.

17.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 15, wherein the ~~retrieved given entitlement~~ ~~information item~~ entitlement information retrieved for all of the retrieval clients is in the form of a container.

18.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim 11, wherein the application is an access manager that is operatively coupled to a web server that receives entity requests from the entity across a network.

19.   (Currently Amended) The apparatus of claim [[11]] 18, wherein the ~~response is an extensible~~ ~~markup language document~~ entity is a user, and wherein the user contacts the web server to obtain a service therefrom.

20.   (Currently Amended) A computer readable medium having a computer program product tangibly embodied therein, wherein the computer program product is operable in a data processing system, ~~in a~~ ~~computer readable medium,~~ for providing dynamic access decision information retrieval, the computer program product comprising:

    instructions for receiving a request for access decision information from an application, wherein the request identifies one or more entitlement information items for an entity and an identity of the entity;

    instructions for determining an information provider for a given entitlement information item within the one or more entitlement information items;

    instructions for retrieving the given entitlement information item from the information provider, wherein the instructions for retrieving includes instructions for generating a retrieval client, wherein the retrieval client retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider;

    instructions for forming a response, wherein the response includes the one or more entitlement information items; and

    instructions for returning the ~~container~~ response to the application.

21.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 20, further comprising:

    instructions for caching the retrieved given entitlement information item in a local storage.

22.   (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the request includes a plurality of information items, wherein the step of determining an information provider includes determining a given information provider for each one of the plurality of information items to form a plurality of information providers, and wherein the instructions for retrieving the given entitlement information item include:

instructions for generating a retrieval client <u>for each one of the plurality of information providers to form a plurality of retrieval clients</u>, wherein <s>the retrieval client retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider</s> <u>each one of the retrieval clients retrieves entitlement information from a given one of the information providers that it is associated with</u>.

23.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 22, wherein the retrieval client generates a protocol module and wherein the protocol module retrieves the given entitlement information item from the information provider using a provider specific protocol.

24.   (Original) The computer program product of claim 22, wherein the retrieved given entitlement information item is in the form of a container.

25.   (Currently Amended) The computer program product of claim 20, wherein the <s>response is an extensible markup language document</s> <u>entity is a user, and wherein the user contacts the application to obtain a service therefrom</u>.